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## Climate change and indigenous peoples

**The impact of climate change on the human rights and lives of indigenous peoples was the subject of a joint debate on 13 October by the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Temporary Committee on Climate Change. MEPs, a UN delegate and representatives of indigenous peoples from north-east Brazil discussed this subject in the context of monitoring the implementation of last year's UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

Opening the debate, Romana Jordan Cizelj (EPP-ED, SI), representing the EP Temporary Committee on Climate Change, said global warming was having a particular impact on indigenous peoples. "They are dependent on natural resources and biodiversity", and their environment is "especially affected by the production of biofuels and hydropower". Any sustainable solution to climate change must take account of all types of "human impact" of policies and the best answer was a "common but differentiated approach". At the same time, indigenous peoples were not just victims but also provided an "early warning system" to the rest of the world of the problems of global warming. This point was backed up by subcommittee chair Hélène Flautre (Greens/EFA, FR), who recalled that it was the Sami people of Finland who had first alerted the world to changes in the earth's climate.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, stressed the need for a "human rights based approach to climate change". First, a distinction must be made between "subsistence emissions" (those essential for a basic standard of living) and "luxury emissions". Then she turned to the problems created for indigenous peoples by the rich world's proposed solutions to climate change: the cultivation of biofuels had led to a "landgrab" and huge consumption of limited water resources. Indigenous people had also been "evicted from their land due to the expansion of uranium mining" (caused by the growth in nuclear power) or "to grow forests for carbon sequestration" (under the banner of emissions trading).

### Representatives of indigenous people take the floor

The hearing was attended by three indigenous representatives of a "Peace campaign by the Indians of the North East region of Brazil". One of their number, Yakuy Tupinambá, told MEPs that "we indigenous peoples are in the front line". The people of her region lived on subsistence crops but, as a result of climate change, "we can't produce because floods and droughts are more intense". She stressed "we don't want to live on charity" and indeed "we know how to live from nature but today we can't", because "our land is turning red under the heat of the sun" and ultimately because "the capitalist economy doesn't believe in anything being free". She argued there was "a war on Mother Earth", which is why their campaign was called "Peace on Earth". Following her speech, she and her two companions, both shamans, performed a ritual song. Among MEPs, Roger Helmer (NA, UK) argued that the problems were not necessarily caused by climate change but by policy responses such as deforestation to grow biofuels. He maintained that "recent scientific findings undermine the arguments of global warming". Subcommittee chair Hélène Flautre responded firmly, suggesting that Mr Helmer was poorly informed and "should read the report of the IPCC" [International Panel on Climate Change]. She then asked whether the plight of the indigenous peoples was being taken into account in the report of the EP climate change committee. In reply, Romana Jordan Cizelj said the report, which is still at the draft stage, "supports a holistic approach" and that indeed "Europe is not as vulnerable as some parts of the world".